

Testimony of Tom Swan, Executive Director of the CT Citizen Action Group (CCAG)

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee

February 19, 2016

Good Afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker and other members of the Appropriations Committee my name is Tom Swan. I am the Executive Director of the CT Citizen Action Group (CCAG).

I want to state that we understand the difficult challenge you are faced with and express our belief that much of the work that needs to be done is outside the purview of this Committee and that is to find additional revenue.

I am focusing my comments today on specific agencies, but want to make clear we are concerned with many parts of the budget and some of the concerns expressed go across the board.

CCAG played a key role in passing our landmark Citizen Election Program. We were very happy that legislators turned back efforts to suspend the program in 2015 and that Governor Malloy does not propose changes in the grant program during an election year.

However, we are very concerned with the continued cuts to the State Elections Enforcement Committee on top of the previous cuts. In order to administer the CEP and protect the integrity of our elections. Their budget should be determined by real costs to fulfill their mission and not be subjected to some arbitrary across the board cut.

Furthermore, we ask you to reject the grouping of all of the watchdog agencies salary lines under the Office of Government Accountability. This appears to be a backdoor way to undermine the independence of these vital agencies. The legislature has previously rejected these type of power plays and should again.

In conclusion I also want to associate myself with the testimony submitted by our Organizing Director, Ann Pratt, in regards to protecting the Commissions.

Thank you for your consideration.